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Exegesis of Philippians – NT632
Thursdays 2:00-4:40 PM

Spring 2002 – Asbury Theological Seminary
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I. Welcome

Have you ever seen that bumper sticker that reads, "The Bible says it, I believe it, that settles it!"? Quite an affirmation!

Most of us would probably affirm wholeheartedly that Scripture is authoritative. Some might even add words, such as inerrant or infallible. Regardless, of how one formulates a basic confession about Scripture, there remains a question that begs to be answered: what does a particular verse or passage of Scripture actually mean?

A high view of Scripture demands interpretation. One of my previous teachers often said, "Exegesis isn't important. It's indispensable!" Without proper interpretation, a high view of Scripture matters little because we will never be able to communicate the truths of Scripture to our culture. Without proper interpretation, the Bible remains at best a respected but mysterious book; at worst it becomes irrelevant.

Our goal in this class is to learn the craft of interpretation. I will serve as your guide. I am here to help you and guide you each step of the way. Don't hesitate to contact me at any time for consultation or clarification.

II. Course Description

An exegetical study of the letter to the Philippians which focuses upon the application of basic exegetical principles to the Greek text and understanding the text within the literary, linguistic, historical and cultural contexts in which it was originally circulated.

III. Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of NT 632 (C or better), each of you will be able:

- 1) To employ an exegetical method relevant to the interpretation of Philippians and other epistolary literature including the use of Greek-based language tools in order to:
 - a. demonstrate proficiency in lexical semantics,
 - b. identify grammatical constructions (i.e., with regard to sentence structure and use of clauses),
 - c. engage in syntactical analyses (i.e., verbal aspect, mood, and voice; use of noun cases);
- 2) To understand Philippians within its socio-historical, literary, and canonical contexts;
- 3) To identify the central issues in the critical study of Philippians;

- 4) To articulate the importance of one's own presuppositions in the task of interpretation;
- 5) To describe the primary theological and ethical concerns of Philippians;
- 6) To demonstrate awareness of how the theological and ethical concerns of Philippians contributes to those of the canon and of constructive theology and ethics;
- 7) To differentiate between the available critical and homiletical/devotional commentaries on Philippians and other NT books;
- 8) To evaluate critically the usefulness of secondary literature in the study of NT books.

Each student should expect to spend up to 7.5-9.0 hours per week on assignments and reflection in pursuit of these course objectives. The precise amount of time spent will vary from week to week and student to student.

IV. Texts

Required

Daniel B. Wallace. *The Basics of New Testament Syntax: An Intermediate Greek Grammar*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1993.

Recommended Commentaries (At minimum, you need to have access to one of the following commentaries. If you have to pick only one, choose O'Brien or Fee. Both of these are large commentaries that deal in depth with the exegetical issues in Philippians)

Peter T. O'Brien. *The Epistle to the Philippians*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.

Gordon D. Fee. *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*. NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

Ben Witherington III. *Friendship and Finances in Philippi: The Letter of Paul to the Philippians*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1994.

Fred B. Craddock. *Philippians*. Interpretation. Atlanta: John Knox, 1985.

Gerald F. Hawthorne. *Philippians*. WBC. Waco: Word, 1983.

Additional resource:

Students may find it economical and beneficial to purchase the following:

The Essential IVP Reference Collection: The Complete Electronic Bible Reference Library. IVP, 2000.

First Class Account – IF you haven't already, open up a First Class account (ATS email). A class folder will appear on your desktop that will contain all hand-outs, powerpoint slides, etc.

V. Evaluation

Evaluation will be based on three areas of work:

1) Class Participation - 10%

2) Module Assignments (1-6) - 65%

This component is the heart of the course. You will learn specific exegetical "lenses" by which to read Scripture. Each module includes self-contained assignments. The modules are weighted as follows:

Modules 1-2 5% each; Modules 3-5 (10% each); Module 6 (25%).

3) Final Exegetical Project (Module 7) -25% **Due May 23 2 PM.**

This last project will allow you to demonstrate the skills that you have acquired throughout the course of the semester. You will be allowed a maximum of 10 double-spaced pages to present an interpretation of an assigned passage (you will have a choice of several) from Philippians.

******All written course materials are to use Times New Roman font (size 12) with 1" margins on all sides. ******

Statement of Grades (from Catalog):

Regarding the assignment of grades, let each one remember that the Seminary defines an "A" as "Exceptional work: outstanding or surpassing achievement of course objectives."

Incompletes (from Catalog)

A grade of "incomplete" will be given only in the case of an "unforeseeable emergency." This does not include church work or problems in other courses at ATS.

VI. Final Comment:

Remember the goal of this class: acquiring the tools and skills necessary to be a responsible (and hopefully profound) interpreter of God's word.

Reaching this goal will require hard work and grappling with topics and issues that you have not had any previous experiences doing. Persevere and you will be happy with the competency and skills that you have attained.

I take an incarnational view of my role as a teacher. I am here to serve you. Do not hesitate to contact me for help. Exegesis is both taught and caught. Thus, the reading and initial presentation of the material always has in mind the assignments in which you

will actually practice the skills. This class is very much hands-on. Sometimes you may feel as if you are being asked to use a skill before you feel that you are ready. This is intentional and part of the process. I think that exegesis is best learned by actually engaging oneself in it -- if we wait until each of us feels "ready" to interpret the Scriptures for God's people, we may never do it. I will be actively involved in all discussions, etc. to make sure that we all stay on course.

I look forward to working with all of you this semester.

VII. Schedule of Modules:

This schedule is set up to ease us into the semester. Essentially, Modules 01-05 teach basic elements of exegesis in isolation of one another. Modules 06-07 will allow you opportunities to synthesize/integrate all of the previous learned skills through application to individual passages within Philippians.

2/14 Module 1 – What is Exegesis

I. DPL

Read the following articles:

Canon, 85-92

Center of Paul's Theology, 92-95

Paul in Acts and Letters, 679-91

Hermeneutics/Interpreting Paul, 388-97

Paul and His Interpreters, 666-679

Rhetorical Criticism, 822-826

II. On-line resources

Consult the following web-based resources.

1)

<http://www.catalystresources.org/issues/vol23.html>

Read the article "The Task of a Confessing Biblical Scholarship" by Francis Watson

2) Note that there are two articles at this site.

<http://www.catalystresources.org/issues/vol18-21.html>

Read two articles from this site:

"Hyperactive Hermeneutics: Is the Bible being Over-interpreted" by Kevn J. Vanhoozer

"John Wesley on the Authority of Scripture"

By Scott Jones

3)

<http://www.sbts.edu/news/sbjt/fall99/schreiner.html>

"Interpreting the Pauline Epistles"

By Thomas R. Schreiner

2/21 Module 2 – Introduction to Philippians

1. Read Philippians at least once before completing the reading listed below.

2. DPL

Philippians, Letter to the 707-13

Caesar's Household, Imperial Household, 83-84

Christology 100-115

Chronology of Paul , pp. 115-123

Church, 123-31.

Opponents of Paul 644-53

3. Commentary

Read the Introduction to the Paul's Letter to the Philippians in either

a) Peter T. O'Brien. *The Epistle to the Philippians*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.

or

b) Gordon D. Fee. *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*. NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

Assignment:

1) Complete a 1-2 page (single-spaced) reflection paper listing significant learnings and questions (Lessons and Puzzles)

2) Survey of Philippians

Assignment: Using your skills learned in your first IBS course, complete a book survey of Philippians. Please include the following components in your survey:

1) Develop an outline (or if you have exceptional computer skills, develop a chart) that breaks Philippians into its main units, sub units, and sub-sub units.

2) Identify and describe the *major* structural relationships that are operative at the Book level. By description, I mean write a paragraph that succinctly describes/illustrates how the structure is operating in the book.

3) List any other major impressions that you have gained through the survey about Philippians as well as any material that may point to the identification of the place of writing, problems facing the Philippian church, Paul's opponents, etc.

Module 3 - Grammatical Analysis)

2/28 Noun Analysis

Reading:

Required:

The Nuances of the Greek Case System 25-92
Prepositions 160-73

Suggested:

The following pages of Wallace will prove helpful in reviewing the use of the adjective/pronouns and filling in the use of the definite article which was barely covered (if at all - depending on your teacher) in Concise.

129-59 Adjective and Pronouns

93-128 Everything that you ever wanted to know about the word "the" but were afraid to ask.

Assignment: Analysis of all nouns and prepositions in Philippians 1:3-11.

3/7 Verbal Analysis

Reading (All pages are from Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax*)
pp. 192-265.

Assignment: Analysis of all verbs in 1:12-26.

3/14 Clause Analysis

Reading:

1) Wallace, pp. 266-285. This will cover what most people consider to be the most difficult aspect of Greek - the Participle. As soon as you read these pages of Wallace, please read the document in this part of the module entitled "Those Pesky Participles." I will try to give you some hints and tricks for identifying and working with participles. You may want to review the participle from whatever textbook you used for Concise Greek.

2) Wallace, pp. 286-302. Here, Wallace discusses Greek clauses as well as conjunctions. After reading this part of Wallace consult my document "Summary Sheet" for a run down of the key points as well as a handy list that you may use when doing clause analysis.

Assignment: Clause analysis of 1:12-26.

3/21 Module 4 – Lexical Semantics

Assignment

[The principal learning for this module is that the meaning of words must be derived from its context with immediate context being decisive.](#)

As we observed in our survey, Phil 2:1-11 is a key passage in the book because it presents Jesus Christ as the chief example for Christian living. This passage (esp. 2:6-11 "The Christ Hymn") also contains a number of debated issues. One of which is our assignment for this Module. The first clause in 2:7 reads *avlla. e`auto.n evken,nwsen* "but he *emptied* himself."

This line has spawned much debate in biblical circles through the centuries. Of what did Christ empty himself? From Asbury's own Wesleyan heritage, we have this take on the passage from C. Wesley's great hymn "And Can It Be That I should Gain" (for those of you who have taken classes exclusively on ExL or on the Orlando campus, this hymn is probably the most frequently sung hymn in public gathering on the Wilmore Campus - it has functioned as the "de facto" theme song of ATS since the administration of Frank Stanger):

He left his father's throne above, so free so initive his grace;
Emptied himself *of all but love*, and bled for Adam's helpless race;
Tis mercy all, immense and free;
O my God, it found out me.

I am not including this example to influence your own thinking/work in any way, but simply to highlight that this well-known hymn offers commentary on our text in question.

Your assignment can be simply stated:

In 3 double-spaced pages or less (12 type, Times New Roman font, 1" margins on all borders), clarify the meaning of *kenow* in Phil 2:7.

Follow these steps:

1) Study all of the occurrences of the verb in the NT and LXX (there are not very many so don't worry). Make sure that you use the BLM and BNM versions for searching with BibleWorks. How does the word function in these contexts? Pay special attention to any occurrences within the Pauline corpus.

2) Spend the majority of your time digging around in the context of 2:1-11 for clues about what Paul is trying to communicate in 2:7. As you discovered in step one, there is not enough of a sample to do much with. Does the structure of 2:1-11 or any of the grammar give you clues as to the meaning?

3) After completing your own work, dialogue/critique with any secondary resources at your disposal. At minimum, this would include the Fee or O'Brien commentary and the article "Christology" in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*.

4) Write up your findings. I am setting a 3 page maximum for this assignment. You may not need this much space, but you may not have any more :^) ! For those of you who like to follow a specific format, here is one.

In your first paragraph (or second, if your thinking/communication style likes to begin with a concrete experience related to the text), state in 1 to 3 sentences the specific meaning of *kenow* in Phil 2:7. The remainder of your paper should present the evidence from #1-3 above that support your thesis.

Module 5 – Contexts of Interpretation

3/28 Inner Biblical Exegesis

Read pp. 630-42 in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* "Old Testament in Paul"

Assignment: Philippians 2:12-18. Discuss Paul's use of the OT as the background to Paul's exhortations in this section. How does Paul's use of OT passages illumine the meaning of Phil 2:12-18?

4/4 SPRING "BREAK" (YEAH RIGHT!!)

4/11 Socio-Historical Context

Readings: Reading

DPL

Hellenism, 383-88

Jew, Paul the 503-511

Judaizers, 512-16

Social Setting of Mission Churches, 883-92

Assignment: Philippians 3:1-6. Discuss the Jewish historical background of this passage. How does awareness of the historical-social milieu of the 1st century illuminate this passage?

4/18 Paul's Literary context

Assignment: Phil. 3:9. In light of the context of 3:9 as well as the remainder of Paul's letters, interpret the meaning of the phrase *dia pistewj Cristou*.

Module 6 – Practice of Exegesis

Biblical Exegesis – Directions for the Practice of Exegesis

This module will provide you with two opportunities to hone your exegetical skills in preparation for completing your final exegetical paper for Module Seven.

Your task is to interpret two of the following passages: 3:12-16, 3:17-21, and 4:2-3. Use the skills that you are acquiring this semester (structural, grammatical, lexical, contextual analysis) to expound the pericope. You will need to be selective in your approach. You are encouraged to work on these projects utilizing your team folder (directions for Team work are below). **Please note that these two papers represent 25% of the final grade. Module 6 and 7 since they are synthetic in nature combine for 50% of the semester grade.**

Format:

Each of the two exegetical papers for this module is limited to a maximum of three double-spaced pages (1" margins, Times New Roman, size 12).

Thus, you will be turning in an exegetical summary of your work. The page limit serves two functions: 1) helps you to work within the time constraints of the semester and 2)

helps you learn to distinguish the important versus the merely interesting elements in a passage.

Your paper should include the following three parts:

Exegetical Summary

- a. **What is the subject of the passage?** (this should be no more than a couple of sentences – succinctly state the principal subject/theme/message of the text)
- b. **What is said about the subject?** (this part will be the longest, about 2 pages) – flesh out in verse by verse commentary or similar format the development of the passage's main idea)
- c. **What is the purpose of what is said?** a page or less
(This section may include answers to the following concerns: Why is this text in its present location and what are the implications of its message? How does it function within the whole of Philippians? How does the message of text inform our understanding of NT theology as well as Christian practice? or to put it another way: What does this passage teach the church?)

I used this format in my presentation of the material from 2:5-11. I will paste it at the bottom of this document.

Please feel free to interact with other commentators, dictionaries, etc., but don't merely cite them as authorities without interacting with their positions. In other words, these assignments are to be based principally on your own inductive work; they are not to be mere anthologies of the interpretive thoughts of others

Directions for Use of Team Folders

- 1) These groups are for consultation. You will be turning in individual assignments. Thus, don't copy each others work. Learn from each other, but don't lose your own individuality by mimicking a colleague's style.
- 2) Help each other in terms of questions to pursue, interpretive issues, helpful resources. What research needs to be done in order to properly understand each passage?
- 3) If time permits, share you ideas with one another and dialogue before the due date. You may post your papers in advance of the due date for feedback that you may then incorporate into your own work.

4/25 See above

5/2 Discussion of Biblical Preaching

5/9 First paper due

5/16 Second Paper due

Module 7

5/23 Final Exegetical Project due by 2 PM

The final assignment is worth 25% of the total grade. We will be using the same general 3 part format that we used in Module 6 except that you have more space. Your final project should be a minimum of 7 pages and a maximum of 10 (1" margins on all sides, Times New Roman, 12 size, double-spaced).

Select one of the following texts and interpret it using the skills/methods learned during the semester: **Phil 1:19-26, 4:4-9, 4:10-20**

This final project is a solo flight and thus is to be completed without the consultation of your colleagues in the class.

Use the three part format again with these suggestions:

- a. **What is the subject of the passage?** (this should be no more than a couple of sentences – succinctly state the principal subject/theme/message of the text)
- b. **What is said about the subject?** (this part will be the longest, 5-8 pages) – flesh out in verse by verse commentary or similar format the development of the passage's main idea)
- c. **What is the purpose of what is said?** 1-2 pages

(This section may include answers to the following concerns: Why is this text in its present location and what are the implications of its message? How does it function within the whole of Philippians? How does the message of text inform our understanding of NT theology as well as Christian practice? or to put it another way: What does this passage teach the church?)